822.91
Pai / Nin
46635

BOMBAY BRANCH

OF THE

Royal Asiatic Society.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 05 October, 2018

18/XIV

THE NINE OF DIAMONDS

And Other Plays

46635
ae

By MRS. BARRY PAIN

LONDON:
CHAPMAN & HALL, LTD.
1913

LL. h. 38

00046635

Permission to perform the pieces appearing in this volume may be obtained by applying to Mr. James B. Pinker, Effingham House, Arundel Street, Strand, London, W.C.

THE NINE OF DIAMONDS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ALLAN ARKWRIGHT. (About 50.)

SYLVIA ARKWRIGHT. His wife. (About 25.)

STEPHEN TRAILL. (About 30.)

A MANSERVANT.

SCENE.

The drawing-room in the ARKWRIGHTS' *flat. Doors C. [leading into vestibule), R. and L. Tasteful modern furniture; two bridge tables with cards, markers and candles. in centre : writing-desk. Electric light.*

THE NINE OF DIAMONDS

CURTAIN *rises on* SYLVIA *and* STEPHEN. *He is standing at card-table, putting together the scattered packs. She is speaking at door C. to unseen guests without. Both are in evening dress.*

SYLVIA.

[*At door C.*] Goodbye again. You must try and forgive me all my bridge sins, Major. Oh, Mrs. Charlie, you won't forget Friday? That's right. Goodbye. Good-night. [*Closes door and comes down wearily.*] Oh dear!—Blow out those candles for me, Stephen. [*He does so.*] I thought that last rubber would never, never end. And I've got real bridge hands—as cold as ice. [*Kneeling at fire and warming them.*] Have you ever known anyone quite so puffed up as poor old Major Knox? I'm sure it's only his clothes that hold him together at all.

STEPHEN.

[*Joining her at fire, and standing.*] I think it's Mrs. Knox who holds him together.

SYLVIA.

She seemed rather furious all the evening, didn't she? Do you think she was offended at Allan's absence?

STEPHEN.

Good gracious! She can't be as provincial as all that. And even in the provinces it must sometimes happen that a man is called away unexpectedly.

SYLVIA.

Well, when I said I was so very sorry that he had been obliged to rush off like that at a moment's notice, she said: "Dear me. *Most* unfortunate," in a tone that clearly implied that she didn't think much of my taste in lies.

STEPHEN.

Then I don't think much of her taste in manners.

SYLVIA.

Well, thank goodness they're all done and over;—fed, bridged, and wiped out—for the present.

STEPHEN.

And I suppose I ought to be wiped out too. I don't want to go.

SYLVIA.

[*Rises and looks at clock.*] I mustn't keep my pampered menials out of their little beds, or give them stuff for scandal, must I.

STEPHEN.

I suppose not. [*Short pause.*] When does he come back?

SYLVIA.

[*Lightly.*] Allan? He said probably to-morrow, but that he'd let me know.

STEPHEN.

If he doesn't turn up to-morrow, shall you be all alone?

SYLVIA.

Alone, but not in the least lonely. You know I'm never that. Only idiots are bored with solitude, The rest know that it's the greatest luxury of this or any other age.

STEPHEN.

Does that mean I'm not to come? [*A short pause.*]

SYLVIA.

[*Turning away.*] Better not, Stephen.

STEPHEN.

Has he been saying anything ?

SYLVIA.

[*Quickly.*] Not a word ; not one word.

STEPHEN.

But he doesn't like me any better.

SYLVIA.

Don't let's talk of that.

STEPHEN.

No—you're right—he's not worth a breath.

SYLVIA.

Hush !

STEPHEN.

I know exactly why he hates me. At least I'm vain enough to think it's only because he knows I know.

SYLVIA.

Know what ?

STEPHEN.

How he treats you. He thinks you've confided in me, no doubt, and wreaks his vengeance on *you*, That's why I'm rather afraid that one of these days I shan't be able to keep my hands off him.

SYLVIA.

Stephen, you must go.

STEPHEN.

All right. I'm off. [*Going.*] When shall I see you again ?

SYLVIA.

Er—I'll ring you up.

STEPHEN.

Soon ? [*Pause.*] Soon ?

SYLVIA.

If it isn't very soon, you'll understand and be *quite* good about it.

STEPHEN.

[*Coming back.*] No I won't. If he hasn't said anything, what is it ? What's up ? Have I done anything ?

SYLVIA.

Nothing that wasn't kind and delightful, as ever.

STEPHEN.

Then *he's* done something. I know it.

SYLVIA.

No, no.

STEPHEN.

He's been torturing you. By heaven, it takes a woman to be the saint that you are, when she doesn't even get the credit for it. You're afraid of him.

SYLVIA.

Yes, I am. But not for myself.

STEPHEN.

For me? [*Pause.*] Why are you afraid, when all the evil is only in his loathsome imagination?

SYLVIA.

I can't speak of it. If you'll only do what I tell you, and not come here—very often, it may be all right.

STEPHEN.

I'm not going to live without seeing you. It wouldn't be living. And I don't think it would make things any better for you. If I thought that my going away altogether would make you happy, I'd go like a shot.

SYLVIA.

People always talk as if happiness were a dire necessity, when it's really only an extra—a luxury—like solitude.

STEPHEN.

But *you must* be happy, if no one else is. This can't go on. It's impossible.

SYLVIA.

What's the matter with you to-night, Stephen ?

STEPHEN.

[*Pacing.*] I don't know. I don't care. Something's got to happen. [*At card-table.*] Come and tell me my fortune.

SYLVIA.

How do you know that I can ?

STEPHEN.

You said you once had an old nurse who told you how to work it.

SYLVIA.

[*Laughing.*] Fancy your remembering that !

STEPHEN.

Why should I forget ? She taught you when you were ill at Bramley, and she had a glass eye.

SYLVIA.

What a memory ! I believe she was really a gipsy. Her skin was like leather. But I loved her. She used

to spread the cards before her like this, [*Sitting at card-table with her head on her hand.*] and sit poring over them with such a face !—And if one interrupted her, she positively groaned. [*The clock strikes twelve. She jumps up.*] Good gracious, there's twelve o'clock. You really must go this minute—seriously.

STEPHEN.

I'll go the moment you've told me my fortune. That's a bargain. [*He sits at table.*] Do I cut to you, or you to me ?

SYLVIA.

[*Sitting opposite him and shuffling the cards.*] I to you, of course. With these green ones. And then you lay them out in front of you in rows of ten. [*She drops a card.*] Oh ! [*She stoops to pick it up. He stoops at same moment. Her hair brushes his cheek.*] Oh, sorry. [*She goes on shuffling. He rises, thrusts his hands deep into his pockets, and strides across the room.*] Don't walk about like a caged tiger. Come here.

STEPHEN.

[*Controlling himself and taking cards, which she has cut.*] I—all right. What next ?

SYLVIA.

Lay them out as I told you, and—oh, your hands are shaking ! Are you cold ?

STEPHEN.

[*Putting a hand on hers.*] Feel.

SYLVIA.

Burning. [*She gets up.*] Let's do this another time. I'm really dead tired, now I come to think of it.

STEPHEN.

[*Holding out his hand.*] I'm a brute. Good-night.

SYLVIA.

[*Shaking hands.*] Goodbye. Do you want a taxi? [*Goes to the bell.*]

STEPHEN.

No, I'll walk, thanks. Don't ring. I'll let myself out.

SYLVIA.

All right.

[*He goes into vestibule door C. She stands still a moment. When the door shuts she lets herself sink on to the sofa and buries her head in the cushions.* STEPHEN RE-ENTERS *hastily, feeling in his overcoat pockets.*]

STEPHEN.

Did I leave—[*seeing her*] Sylvia!

SYLVIA.

[*Jumping up quickly and drying her eyes.*] Have you left something ?

STEPHEN.

Sylvia, what is it ? Oh poor one, dear one !

[*She tries to speak, but chokes on a dry sob. He suddenly seizes her in his arms and covers her with kisses.*]

SYLVIA.

[*Pushing him away, and sinking on to her knees.*] What are you doing ? Go away ! Go away ! Go !

STEPHEN.

I couldn't help myself. Say you'll forgive me and I'll go.

SYLVIA.

[*Rising.*] I can never look him in the face again. I'm soiled—degraded—ashamed. No. I can't and won't forgive you. It's horrible ! [*She dashes into her room, R.*]

STEPHEN.

[*Knocking at her door R.*] I'm going. It's all right. But don't let that be your last word. Have a little pity.

[ALLAN ARKWRIGHT ENTERS *noiselessly by door C., listens to next few sentences, and slips out again, leaving door ajar.*]

Say you'll forgive me. I've been fighting the devil in me all the evening. Say the one word, "Yes,"—that you forgive. Then I'll go ; I swear it. [*Pause. He turns hopelessly and moves towards door C.* ALLAN RE-ENTERS *breezily. He carries brown bag, and wears hat and overcoat. He speaks with an oily sneer ; repellent manner and appearance.*]

ALLAN.

[*Mock genially.*] Ah, my friend Stephen ! Still here and all alone ? Where's Sylvia ?

STEPHEN.

Just gone to her room and I'm just off. Good-night.

ALLAN.

[*Barring the way.*] No, no ; not in such a hurry. Two words—surely. [*He closes door C. and comes down.*] I want to hear how the evening went off. Bridge, of course, and I hope a decent dinner ? [STEPHEN *keeps silence.*] It was bad luck my being called off to-night. But business is business. I was lucky to get away so much sooner than I had expected. Sit down, sit down [*He has taken off hat and overcoat while talking, and sits by fire.*]

STEPHEN.

[*Standing.*] I can't stop. If you've anything to say to me we can meet later on.

ALLAN.

No time like the present, my trusty old friend Stephen. Won't you light up? [*Offers him cigarettes.*]

STEPHEN.

No thanks.

ALLAN.

A mistake, I assure you—a mistake. These are excellent cigarettes. Very soothing to the nerves. And after these little love scenes, one needs soothing —what? [*He lights up.*]

STEPHEN.

[*Glancing quickly at door C., and back at* ALLAN.] I see. If you've anything to say, please say it squarely and at once. I'm ready.

ALLAN.

Well, you haven't yet explained to me how your hostess came to leave you here all alone, so inhospitably.

STEPHEN.

She had just left me. I was on the point of going.

ALLAN.

With or without her forgiveness ?—for what ?

STEPHEN.

For coming back. She was tired. She'd gone to bed. I came back for my cigarette case. Here it is. And now——.

ALLAN.

[*Rising.*] And now we must understand each other a little better. Let us be as frank and as friendly as possible. I may take it, on evidence collected over some considerable period, that you are my wife's lover.

STEPHEN.

[*Hotly.*] That's a lie—in your sense.

ALLAN.

A very attractive woman, what ? I found her so, and can well believe——.

STEPHEN.

Your wife is the best and purest woman that walks this earth. The only wrong thing she ever did was to let *you* come into her life, you——.

ALLAN.

Take care, my dear Stephen. I should like to conclude this little conversation as politely as we have begun it. Why not? You consider, I gather, that she has not made a good marriage. No doubt she has fully imparted to you her views on this subject.

STEPHEN.

She has never spoken a word against you, to me, from the day I first met her, to this.

ALLAN.

At any rate you are chivalrous enough to say so. Precisely what one would expect of so honourable a gentleman. But you're not telling me about this evening. I think, perhaps, we ought to question my wife too, on this point. A woman has not the same obligations to the tyrant chivalry, you know. It might be interesting—what? I'll send for her. [*He rings.*]

STEPHEN.

I'll tell you the truth. Like most eavesdroppers, you've only picked up half of it. She's absolutely blameless in every way, and always has been, from first to last—as pure as the stars. I lost my head to-night. I'll own to it.

[ENTER *butler door L.*]

ALLAN.

Ask Mrs. Arkwright to come here for a moment. Tell her I am back. [*Pointing to bag.*] And take that.

BUTLER.

Very good, sir. [*Picks up bag and goes, L.*]

ALLAN.

[*To* STEPHEN.] You lost your head to-night. Which means ?

STEPHEN.

What you probably saw. I kissed her—for the first and only time. She had told me to go away—more than once. I was going just before you turned up, but I came back for this [*showing cigarette case*]. She looked tired and wretched, and, as I say, I lost control for a moment. She said she wouldn't forgive it. I was begging her to revoke that sentence. That's all. And that's God's truth.

ALLAN.

The truth of a perfect gentleman, at all events. We will see if it tallies with my wife's version. That would be interesting.

[ENTER SYLVIA *door R. She wears a peignoir and her hair down. She starts on seeing* STEPHEN, *but controls herself with an effort and goes towards* ALLAN.]

SYLVIA.

You want me? I didn't hear you come back.

ALLAN.

Sit down, my dear. [*She sits.*] You will excuse a more demonstrative greeting in the presence of a third party, even though it be our dear and trusted friend, Stephen. We've just been having a little chat—he and I—and it struck me that you might like to join in it, and tell me perhaps how this evening went off; how our guests enjoyed themselves. I should like to know exactly what happened. Let us begin at the beginning. I am called out of town, and dear Stephen comes to play host in my place. I am able by lucky chance to return to-day instead of to-morrow——.

STEPHEN.

Quite by chance, of course.

ALLAN.

And find our young friend still here at midnight, pleading for forgiveness at your door. Will you tell me what you had to forgive?

STEPHEN.

[*Quickly.*] I've told him the truth.

SYLVIA.

Then I've nothing to add, excepting that I'm sorry.

ALLAN.

But one is never tired of hearing a good story, I want to hear the truth once more.

SYLVIA.

I've nothing more to say.

ALLAN

Please.

SYLVIA.

[*Rising and speaking in tense, clear voice.*] Then I will tell you this : that whatever may have happened between you and me, I promised myself, long ago, to dedicate my life to you absolutely and honestly, if only for Betty's sake. And this promise I have kept and will go on keeping as long as you make it humanly possible for me.

ALLAN.

Very interesting. But I was not asking so much for a sketch of your married life as for a sketch of this particular evening—if you will be so kind.

SYLVIA.

I've nothing more to say.

ALLAN.

Unfortunately I must insist on your speaking.

SYLVIA.

I refuse.

ALLAN

You refuse to obey me?

SYLVIA.

I do.

ALLAN.

[*Shouting furiously.*] Go to your room! [*Controlling himself and speaking softly.*] Go to your room, if you please. [*Aside to her.*] I shall find the means perhaps to make you speak presently.

SYLVIA.

I will not go till I've seen him leave the house in safety.

ALLAN.

Ah, you're afraid for him! [*To* STEPHEN.] You see, she has indeed forgiven you. A true friend, my dear Stephen. Ready to sacrifice herself for you—a great compliment, and one which strengthens my little theories. Don't let it turn your head, young man, that an attractive married woman throws herself at your feet—is ready to sacrifice so much to you—babbles of you in her sleep——. [*She makes a supplicating movement.*] Oh dear, yes—continually and most affectionately, I assure you. The hot

impulsive blood of youth—we know, we know ! [*He laughs horribly and stops quite abruptly.*] Will you go to your room before I say more ?

STEPHEN.

I beg you to go. And when I go, I shall remain outside this house to-night, in case I'm wanted.

ALLAN.

A watchdog, a sentinel. Ah, what a friend !

SYLVIA.

[*To* STEPHEN.] Thank you. [*She hesitates a moment, and then goes to door R.*]

ALLAN.

[*Following her, aside.*] I'll see you shortly.

[*She goes quickly. He pushes a heavy chair before the door, then locks doors L. and C.*]

[*To* STEPHEN.] One cannot be too careful when one desires a little privacy, what ? [*He sits and takes another cigarette.*] Now then—won't you be seated ? [STEPHEN *stands where he is.*] No ? Well to continue our talk on this little matter— a very simple matter, after all. No mysteries, no complications. A common enough story. You are in love with my

wife and she with you. Unhappily she has a husband still living—one, moreover, who has the bad taste to dislike the *menage a trois*. Unhappily again, the law and society are on his side. Powerful allies, who won't allow more than one man to each individual woman. A most ungenerous allowance, as you are doubtless thinking.

STEPHEN.

[*In tense voice.*] I'm thinking that unless you cut this as short as you can, it's just possible that my patience may get exhausted before your eloquence, and then, by heaven !——.

ALLAN.

Threats ? Come, come. This is no melodrama. Just a friendly chat—what ? Now, I have a suggestion to make. It is clear that the thing which would most easily and quickly solve the little difficulties of this situation, would be your lamented absence, for a while, at any rate. I might, of course, forbid you the house, which would only put you to the inconvenience of meeting elsewhere. So I suggest a little foreign travel ; and if this should present any financial difficulties, well—I'm not a poor man, as you know. Something might be arranged, what ?

STEPHEN.

[*With a short sardonic laugh.*] I'm to take a little trip at your expense ?

ALLAN.

At my expense, on condition that you give me a written promise not to communicate with my wife in any way whatsoever.

STEPHEN.

I should like to know what answer you really expect to that. It might be amusing.

ALLAN.

You refuse to go?

STEPHEN.

And leave her at your mercy? I do.

ALLAN.

Ah, you wish to remain as her knight-errant—her protector against her lawful master?

STEPHEN.

I will take my marching orders from her and from no one else; and before I obeyed even her, *I* should require a written promise from *you*—a promise that she might have Isabel here to live with her.

ALLAN.

Another protector! Didn't she tell you that the last time that she suggested foisting her sister on my

company, I forbade her to mention the subject again? That holds good.

STEPHEN.

You refuse my request, and I refuse yours. What's next?

ALLAN.

You are sure that you are in a position to make conditions?

STEPHEN.

I make them in any case.

ALLAN.

Then I fall back on a second suggestion. You will perceive, of course, that I am not speaking on impulse. What I suggest now has been often and carefully thought out.

STEPHEN.

Go on.

ALLAN.

[*Rising and standing before fire.*] My second suggestion is this: that one of us two goes out altogether.

STEPHEN.

Explain yourself.

ALLAN.

[*Crossing to desk and opening a drawer.*] Certainly. Do you happen to possess a revolver ?

STEPHEN.

No.

ALLAN.

[*Taking out and opening a wooden case.*] Ah ! How lucky that I happen to possess a pair of them. Nice little instruments, as you will see—in perfect order. Now I suggest that we deal out a pack of cards, and that the one who gets the nine of diamonds—goes out. You follow me ?

STEPHEN.

I do.

ALLAN.

Goes out within twenty-four hours. No long delay. No unpleasant anticipation, what ? Think—if the " curse of Scotland " falls to me !—*Your* freedom, *her* freedom—ha, ha, ha ! What a happy solution, eh ?

STEPHEN.

And if it falls to *me* ?

ALLAN.

[*Sardonically.*] Oh, such bad luck, such rank

injustice, is not conceivable. The Fates will see to it that *I* go out.

STEPHEN.

By heaven ! I won't cheat her of such a chance.

ALLAN.

A true philanthropist ! But before we deal, one more suggestion. It will be necessary, if we are to avoid a scandal, that there should be some written explanation, to do away with all mystery, to deprive the scandal-mongers of their tit-bit, what ? A plain statement, something of this kind. [*He goes to desk.*] The shorter, the better. [*He writes.* STEPHEN *looks fixedly at door R. Rising.*] Will you read that ? It's subject, of course, to your approval.

STEPHEN.

[*Reads.*] " I have returned from an interview with my doctor. He has told me the truth at my request. I prefer instant death to slow torture, and therefore take my life."

ALLAN.

You will copy that out in your own hand-writing —if you approve.

STEPHEN.

All right.

ALLAN.

And any other letters that you may write privately will bear this out.

STEPHEN.

All right. [*He lays the letter on table.*]

ALLAN.

If the card falls to me, I write a letter of the same description. I think that's all. So now—will you choose the cards?

STEPHEN.

The green ones.

ALLAN.

Good. [*He shuffles quickly.*] Will you cut? [STEPHEN *cuts to him.*] Thanks. Er—er—you're sure that you understand these revolvers?

STEPHEN.

[*Going to table at back and picking one up.*] Are they loaded?

ALLAN.

[*Quickly and furtively arranging the cards.*] They are both loaded. Be careful.

STEPHEN.

[*Watching* ALLAN'S *reflection in the glass, but making no sign.*] Are you ready ?

ALLAN.

I am ready.

[*They sit at table,* ALLAN *deals slowly, with occasional pauses.* STEPHEN *makes no movement. The nine falls to* STEPHEN.]

Ah !

STEPHEN.

[*Jumping up and flinging his cards across the table.*] And now supposing we deal fairly ?

ALLAN.

[*Cringing.*] What do you mean ?

STEPHEN.

I mean that next time you fake a pack of cards to save your own skin, you'd better do it in a room where there's no looking-glass—you scoundrel !

ALLAN.

You dare to insinuate—— ?

STEPHEN.

No, I don't insinuate. I call you a cheat and a murderer.

ALLAN.

[*Trembling and licking his lips.*] Take care, young man. Don't go too far. Don't forget that I can punish you doubly—through yourself and through her. She's still mine, to do with what I like——

STEPHEN.

[*Springing upon him.*] Not while I've got life in my body.

ALLAN.

[*Staggering back, and reaching behind him for a revolver.*] Let go! Let go, I say!

STEPHEN.

Swallow those words. Swallow your own poison.

[*He forces him back on to the sofa. They struggle desperately.*]

ALLAN.

Let go!—or take that. [*He points revolver at* STEPHEN. STEPHEN *twists it in his hand. It goes off.* ALLAN *falls with a groan and lies prostrate with a wound in his temple. The handle of the bedroom door is rattled furiously.*]

SYLVIA.

[*Through the door, in agonised fear.*] What is it? Stephen! Allan! Open, open! [*She beats with*

her fists on the door. STEPHEN *goes to* ALLAN, *looks closely at him, and feels his heart.*]

STEPHEN.

Don't come in, Go back, go back !

[*She hurls herself against the door, pushes back the heavy chair, and staggers blindly into the room.*]

SYLVIA.

I heard it. What's happened ? You're hurt !

STEPHEN.

[*Quietly, pointing to* ALLAN.] I've killed him.

SYLVIA.

[*With a shriek.*] Oh, my God !

[*She staggers back, faint with horror, then is about to rush to* ALLAN, *when* STEPHEN *catches and holds her.*]

STEPHEN.

Don't look. It's all over. Don't make a noise.

SYLVIA.

[*Trembling and shrinking from his touch.*] What shall I do ? What shall I do ?

STEPHEN.

Nothing, except try to be brave. I'm going now—I shall be wanted. [*She looks dazed.*] But before I say goodbye—for good—I want you to know——. Can you hear me? [*She nods.*] Try to listen.

SYLVIA.

Yes, yes.

STEPHEN.

[*Speaking in short breaths.*] Don't look at that. It was his idea—one of us was to clear out. He believed the worst. He dealt the cards. The one who got the nine of diamonds was to shoot himself. I cut—and I saw him fake the cards. Saw him in that glass——.

SYLVIA.

[*Covering her face with her hands.*] Oh no, no!

STEPHEN.

So the nine of diamonds fell to me. It was all planned—no scandal, he said—I was to copy this, [*She reads the letter distractedly to herself.*] When I called him—what he was—I don't know what happened. He brought you into it, and I saw red. I don't know how he got hold of the thing—he meant murder, but I turned his hand in self-defence. You heard what happened—And now I'm going. Do you

mind saying goodbye? We shan't meet again, unless it's in court. [*He holds out his hand.*]

SYLVIA.

[*Looking at it.*] No, no, Look!

STEPHEN.

Oh! [*He wipes his hand and turns to go.*] You must call up the servants—and the rest will be wanting to come in here soon—the police.

SYLVIA.

[*Frenziedly.*] No, no! They mustn't come. Don't let them come. I don't want to go mad. Don't, don't let them find you—you must go away.

STEPHEN.

And declare myself guilty?

SYLVIA.

No, no! It wasn't murder. Won't they believe it?

STEPHEN.

I've no witnesses.

SYLVIA.

They need never know that you were here If you go to your rooms—now—quickly——.

STEPHEN.

The servants know that I was here—alone—with him.

SYLVIA.

What will they do to you?

STEPHEN.

Don't think of that.

SYLVIA.

Yes, yes. I will! I must! Oh wait, wait! Let *me* go to them first.

STEPHEN.

You! You're to be out of this, whatever happens.

SYLVIA.

How can I? Listen, wait. It was his wish—no scandal—you said so—the letter—Ah, wait! [*She seizes the letter, and reads it again quickly to herself.*] Look, look! He's saved you—with his own hand! [*She places the letter on table by* ALLAN'S *side. and leaves the revolver where it lies, by his right hand.*]

STEPHEN.

[*Under his breath.*] My God! I can't. I won't.

SYLVIA.

For *my* sake. He wrote it for that—to save me—think—for me you will—only for me. If you give yourself up, my name will be in every mouth. I won't know where to hide.

STEPHEN.

Sylvia!

SYLVIA.

There's no other way. Come! [*She takes his hand and leads him to the door whispering.*] Shall I leave the light on? Yes, he hates the dark so. Goodbye, Stephen. I'm not frightened any more. You see I'm not. Go softly. Go quickly.

[STEPHEN *wrings her hand and goes blindly out. She closes the door and lets herself fall against it for a moment, as if exhausted. Then pulls herself together with an effort, her hands to her head. She locks door C., unlocks door L., quietly and swiftly, and backs, with distended eyes on the body, till she reaches her bedroom door and passes through it. One hears her lock it as the* CURTAIN *drops.*]

LOST HEARTS

A FAIRY PLAY FOR CHILDREN

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PRINCE CHARMING.

PRINCESS DARLING.

THE FAIRY QUEEN.

CUPID.

SCENE : *A glade in the forest ; the setting can be as simple or as elaborate as desired.*

TIME : *Once Upon.*

LOST HEARTS

Curtain rises on empty stage. ENTER PRINCESS DARLING. *She walks slowly, pausing now and then to turn over leaves and flowers with her foot, as if seeking something on the ground.*

PRINCESS.

[*Suddenly flopping down.*] Oh, dear! I *am* getting tired of poking about among the leaves and finding nothing but toadstools, and lizards, and frogs and things that make me jump. Why, to look for a small locket in this great forest is just like looking for a needle in a bundle of hay—only more so. [*Nibbling petulantly at a long stalk.*] I don't really see why my dearly beloved and respected parents should make such a fuss about the loss of one tiny ruby heart, when I've got far more beautiful jewels in my casket. I've been just as happy since I lost it as ever I was before. And, after all, if the fairies give a ruby heart to *all* their god-children, they must have a tremendous lot of them—quite a large stock, as the shops say—and I might perhaps get them to give me another—say on my wedding day—*if* I ever marry, which of course is most unlikely. [*Sighs deeply and gets up.*] Well, I suppose I must go on looking, else——

[ENTER THE FAIRY QUEEN. *She runs in on tiptoe, and looks quickly round.*]

FAIRY QUEEN.

Was that a sigh? [*Sees the* PRINCESS, *and dances up to her.*] Oh, welcome, Princess Darling! I hope that wasn't your sigh?

PRINCESS.

[*Sweeping a low curtsey.*] I salute your majesty. But I'm afraid it was entirely my sigh.

FAIRY QUEEN.

Why, it was enough to frighten an owl off its perch. Is anything wrong?

PRINCESS.

A little bit, I'm sorry to say.

FAIRY QUEEN.

I'm sorry to hear it. We call you "the Happy Princess" among ourselves, you know.

PRINCESS.

But I've had rather a serious loss, you see; at least, my parents say it's serious. *They* say I've lost the most precious of all my possessions.

FAIRY QUEEN.

What! *Not* the white squirrel that we gave you!

PRINCESS.

Oh no, no—I should be sobbing if it were that. It's—I hope you won't be angry with me, dearest godmother—it's—my ruby heart.

FAIRY QUEEN.

[*Turning away to hide a smile.*] Dear me! How did you come to lose it? Sit down and tell me all about it. I won't be cross. [*She sits.*]

PRINCESS.

[*Sitting beside her.*] Well, it was like this: I came to this wood last Saturday, as you know——

FAIRY QUEEN.

I remember—at sunset—and you sang catches with your maids of honour.

PRINCESS.

Yes, and we paddled in the stream over there, and picked wild strawberries, and had a lovely time. And then——

FAIRY QUEEN.

What then? I had a Levee in the Mushroom Grove that night, so I was busy all evening.

PRINCESS.

Well, just as the moon was rising and we were thinking of going back to the Palace, we heard sounds of a horse's hoofs thudding on the moss and—and——

FAIRY QUEEN.

Go on, dear.

PRINCESS.

And there was Prince Charming on his white mare, Snowflake. He had lost his way to the Palace——

FAIRY QUEEN.

His own ?

PRINCESS.

No, ours—silly of him, wasn't it ? So of course we had to shew him the nearest cut—through the Fox-glove Dell—and he stayed to supper, and then I had to put him on the right way back—he has *no* bump of locality, you know—and that very night, when my maids had brushed my hair and were putting on my white silk night-dress, I found that my ruby heart was gone ! [*Laughing.*] Wasn't it dreadful ?

FAIRY QUEEN.

[*Shaking her head.*] It was bound to happen.

PRINCESS.

I think someone must have trifled with the chain. Anyway, there was no end of a fuss ; all the servants were sent scuttling about the grounds to look for it.

FAIRY QUEEN.

Did they have the gold-fish pond dragged ?

PRINCESS.

Yes, twice. And my father has offered a ridiculously big reward. But *I* thought—perhaps *you* could help me. I know I must have lost it in this forest, so if you could give the fairies a night off and let them go through the wood with small rakes, and look into the birds' and squirrels' homes, and so on——

FAIRY QUEEN.

[*Shaking her head.*] Useless, I'm afraid—quite useless. But I may think of a better plan.

PRINCESS.

I know my mother would be so enchanted if it did turn up that I should have *no* trouble in getting her to give a big ball and invite every one of you.

FAIRY QUEEN.

We should love to come. I'm not without hope of its turning up, because—well, the fact is, I know

someone who has something to do with the fashioning of these ruby hearts, and if I can get hold of him—— [*Jumping up.*] Just wait a moment. [*Runs to the side.*]

PRINCESS.

Oh, you're not going? [*Rises.*]

FAIRY QUEEN.

No, no. Sit down again, please. [*Calls off.*] Puck! Puck! Where are you hiding now, you little torment?

[THE PRINCESS *rests her head on her hand as if suddenly overcome with sleepiness.*]

PUCK'S VOICE OFF.

Hullo! Are you there?

FAIRY QUEEN.

Of course I am. Where are you?

PUCK.

Look up! 10995302 oak tree.

FAIRY QUEEN.

Silly boy! Oh, I see you. Come down at once. I want you to hurry off on a message for me——

PUCK.

As usual!

FAIRY QUEEN.

Now don't be rude, but just run as fast as ever you can go and see if Cupid could come and speak to me—*at once*—or even sooner—on a most important matter. Off you go. I give you two minutes.

PUCK.

Right you are. Ring off.

FAIRY QUEEN.

Good boy. [*Returns to* PRINCESS.] Oh, you're tired, Princess Darling.

PRINCESS.

I think I am. I've been roaming through the wood for such a long time.

FAIRY QUEEN.

Well, you shall curl yourself up now on this nice springy moss, and I'll send you into a lovely sleep, full of the very best kind of dreams that we can make. [*Claps her hands.*] Blue-bells, tune up!

[*Soft dance music is heard off. The* FAIRY QUEEN *begins to dance, waving her wand round the* PRINCESS.]

PRINCESS.

[*Drowsily.*] Oh, thank you. How nice—wish I'd found it—I couldn't *help* losing it, could I?—I believe it was stolen——

FAIRY QUEEN.

[*Dancing.*] Shut your eyes.

[THE PRINCESS *drops asleep, gradually.* THE QUEEN *is still dancing when* ENTER CUPID, *running. He carries his bow and arrows, and his head is crowned with a wreath of roses.*]

CUPID.

[*Breathlessly.*] Here I am!

FAIRY QUEEN.

[*Kissing him.*] Ah, Cupid! Good.

CUPID.

You sent for me.

FAIRY QUEEN.

Hush! Talk softly. The Princess Darling is fast asleep, and it's about her that I wanted to see you.

CUPID.

One moment—she's so sweet! [*He stoops and kisses the* PRINCESS.] Well, what is it?

FAIRY QUEEN.

I'm sorry to have had to send for you at your busiest time——

CUPID.

I am terribly rushed this Spring—but always at *your* service, dear Queen.

FAIRY QUEEN.

Well, the matter was most important or I wouldn't have troubled you. I'm afraid, Cupid, that you've been a trifle negligent of late.

CUPID.

I? Never!

FAIRY QUEEN.

Well, you knew that this sweet Princess had lost her heart——

CUPID.

Of course I knew

FAIRY QUEEN.

And yet you took no trouble about it.

CUPID.

Excuse me, I was working hard at it when you sent for me.

FAIRY QUEEN.

But what were you doing?

CUPID.

Sending Prince Charming to this very spot—at my own expense too.

FAIRY QUEEN.

[*Slily.*] Ah, I *think* I see. Then I'm sorry I scolded you, darling, and you must forgive me.

CUPID.

I love you. [*He kisses her.*]

FAIRY QUEEN.

Darlingest boy! Oh, look! [*Pointing L.*] There *is* Prince Charming—wrapped in thought. We'd better hide, if I know anything about it!

CUPID.

Come along! Quick! [*They take hands and run off R. laughing.*]

[ENTER PRINCE CHARMING, L. *He is looking for something on the ground in a desultory way in the intervals of whittling a stick.*]

PRINCE.

I shall never find it—never! Who but a ferret could find a small ruby heart in this great forest! For my own part, I shouldn't trouble about it if others were not so ridiculously anxious. I can't see that it matters. I'm just as well without it—just as happy—though they won't admit it. And as to being sleepless, I'd *rather* keep awake and think. Anyhow, it seems positively idiotic to hunt for it like this when it's probably at the bottom of a rabbit-hole by now—or up in some jackdaw's nest —or—Puck alone knows where! I shall give it up, till sunset at any rate, and have a rest. [*Turns and goes towards the* PRINCESS. *Sees her, still asleep, and starts back with a little cry of joy.*] Oh! Princess! Shall I waken her? It seems a shame. Perhaps she's tired. What luck to meet her here again—in the very place where we parted—and how enchantingly sweet she looks, with her hair spread round her like golden gossamer. I *must* kiss just one curl —quite gently. It won't disturb her. [*Kisses her hair.*] Dearest Princess!

[*She wakes with a start.*]

PRINCESS.

[*Rubbing her eyes.*] I dreamed—[*sees the* PRINCE.] Oh, it was real! [*Jumps up.*] Prince Charming!

PRINCE.

[*Bowing.*] Princess Darling! [*He kisses her hand, kneeling for a moment.*]

PRINCESS.

[*Shyly.*] How did you come? I didn't hear you.

PRINCE.

I came on foot to look for—a trifle that I had mislaid—somewhere about the forest, and then I saw you lying here fast asleep.

PRINCESS.

Excuse me. I may have been dozing—the sun was rather overpowering, wasn't it—and I was tired of searching for——[*stops short*].

PRINCE.

Have you lost something too?

PRINCESS.

Oh, nothing to speak of. It's of no consequence whatever. I'm not going to trouble about it any longer. Let's talk of something else. [*She sits.*]

PRINCE.

[*Sitting beside her.*] Yes, let's. Er ——

PRINCESS.

Er——. It's been a lovely day, hasn't it?

PRINCE.

One of the nicest that I can remember.
[*They glance shyly at each other. Pause.*]

PRINCESS.

It's your turn now.

PRINCE.

My turn?

PRINCESS.

To say something.

PRINCE.

Oh, yes, of course, so it is. Er—would you mind suggesting something?

PRINCESS.

With pleasure. Er——[*glances and pause as before.*]

PRINCE.

May I talk of you?

PRINCESS.

Certainly not when you're talking *to* me.

PRINCE.

But I'm afraid I can't think of anything else.

PRINCESS.

[*Getting up.*] Then shall we walk instead of talking?

PRINCE.

I should love it. And as we've both lost something we might perhaps be looking about a little as we go. [*He holds out his hand.*]

PRINCESS.

[*Taking it.*] It certainly would be a little less dull than having a search-party all by oneself. And four eyes instead of two——

PRINCE.

Splendid. Which way shall we go?

PRINCESS.

This way. [*They go towards R. wing.*]

[ENTER THE FAIRY QUEEN *R.*]

FAIRY QUEEN.

Oh, Prince Charming! Welcome!

PRINCE.

[*Bowing low.*] I salute your Majesty!

FAIRY QUEEN.

[*To* PRINCESS.] I hope you didn't think I had neglected you, Princess Darling. The fact is I had a visitor. [*Calls off.*] Cupid! [*To both.*] I should like to introduce him.

[ENTER CUPID *R.*]

A very old friend—we call him Cupid.

[*Both bow to* CUPID.]

CUPID.

[*Smiling and kissing his hand to them.*] I think they know me.

PRINCE.

I'm afraid—I seem to have met you—and yet——

PRINCESS.

I must confess—it's very rude of me——

CUPID.

You don't recognise me? Never mind. I'm used to that.

PRINCE.

[*To* FAIRY QUEEN.] Did you say an *old* friend? I should have said a very young friend.

FAIRY QUEEN.

He's as old as the world—and never a grey hair.

PRINCE AND PRINCESS.

[*To each other.*] Wonderful!

FAIRY QUEEN.

But you were just going for a stroll. Don't let me keep you.

CUPID.

May I come with you, if I won't be in the way?

PRINCE AND PRINCESS.

[*Together.*] Delighted. Enchanted. [*They hold out their hands to him.*]

FAIRY QUEEN.

[*To* CUPID.] One moment, dear. [*He runs to her Aside to him.*] What about those ruby hearts?

CUPID.

[*Aside.*] I'll see to it that each finds the other's. Trust me.

FAIRY QUEEN.

I do. [*He runs back.*] [*Aloud.*] Well, good-bye all. Come again soon. I'm always at home on the first and third Friday in every month, you remember.

PRINCESS.

Yes, we'll come often.

ALL THREE.

[*Waving and kissing their hands as they move off.*] Good-bye! Good-bye!

FAIRY QUEEN.

Good-bye! Be good and you'll be happy. [*They go. To audience.*] And I'll have lots of fun! [*Claps her hands.*] Tune up, bluebells!

She dances delightedly to music off as :

CURTAIN DESCENDS.

THE CONQUEST

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

KEITH HERALD.

MARION SAWYER.

BARBARA NEALE.

SCENE: *A student's studio, near the Art School, Raybridge. The room is untidy, littered with canvasses, sketches, casts, etc., and furnished sparsely with bits of cheap old furniture; one or two easels. No carpet. A fancy costume of blue and silver gauze, a pair of wings, and a wig of long golden hair lie thrown across a couch.*

TIME: *A summer afternoon.*

THE CONQUEST

Marion is an ineffective-looking, neutral-tinted girl of about 25, with brown hair brushed straight off her forehead and knotted firmly behind. She wears glasses, a large soiled cotton overall with sleeves, and rational walking shoes. She is painting at the head and shoulders of Barbara Neale, a very pretty girl with fluffed out red [or fair] hair ; she wears a light summer gown, and is posed on a model's throne, with flowers in her hair. Her hat is on a chair close by.

MARION.

[*Painting, with two brushes in her mouth.*] No, you can't possibly go yet. Sorry.

BARBARA.

[*Without changing her position.*] But I can't possibly stay for more than five minutes. Sorrier.

MARION.

Compromise. Give me ten minutes. Conny won't mind waiting. She was born to wait.

BARBARA.

But not outside a flower show in the broiling sun.

MARION.

Oh, yes. Anywhere.

BARBARA.

Well, I'll give you ten minutes, against my better conscience. But not one second more. An appointment is an appointment—even with Conny. Why don't you come too? Change your mind. *Do!*

MARION.

Not for two pensions. It's changing my clothes, not my mind, that I bar. I can't do flower shows, anyway; and I must do this whilst I'm hot on it.

BARBARA.

[*Teasingly.*] "He" 's sure to be there.

MARION.

Who's "He"?

BARBARA.

That's right. Don't you give yourself away, sly-boots.

MARION.

If you mean Keith Herald, that's an added reason for staying here—though why on earth he should attend a local flower show, where he won't know two cats, I fail to see.

BARBARA.

Do you really? [*Laughs.*] I *don't* think! You are an odd card—upon my word. Polly Fraser says he's been speaking of you to heaps of people—shouting your praises and asking all sorts of questions. Even *I* noticed how he never took his eyes off you all through the performance. Mashed to atoms.

MARION.

[*Making a grimace.*] Fancy having a Blessed Damozel face and speaking like 'Arriet on the 'Eath. You really are——.

BARBARA.

I know it. I wouldn't be refined for anything you could offer me. If I have the misfortune to look refined it's a thorough misfit, my dear. Given my own way, every student in this blessed Art School should wear neat little hobble skirts and high heels. I'd have no hatless and waistless brigade nonsense—no art muslins or sandals or any other beastly affectations.

MARION.

Or any annual Shakespeare murdering?

BARBARA.

Yes, I'd have the theatricals all right—just to bring

out your talent. You're a genius. I don't believe in suppressing genius, even though it means encouraging the totally untalented at the same time. Keith Herald——.

MARION.

Oh, bother Keith Herald!

BARBARA.

Why are you so hard on him?

MARION.

How can I be hard on him when I simply don't know him?

BARBARA.

Not *his* fault that you don't know him.

MARION.

I didn't say it was.

BARBARA.

It's your obstinacy. Personally I think it's simply silly and priggish not to have a little sport when it's knocking at one's door, so to say. It isn't even as if he were old and ugly. We all think he's jolly good-looking.

MARION.

And I'm not, which is just where the shoe pinches.

Like likes its like. I, as I really am, would give him the shock of his life.

BARBARA.

What rot ! If you can look as you looked last night and on Monday, it simply shows that you're wasting your—what's the word I want ?—your potentialities, which is of course wicked.

MARION.

Oh ! I'm to go about chronically in that wig with a pound of paint on my face and a pair of wings tied on ? Thanks.

BARBARA.

You're to make the best of yourself—that's all—and it's what every woman does instinctively if she's got any sense—and any taste.

MARION.

Thanks again.

BARBARA.

Thank away. I don't care. We all say the same things about you, only I happen to have the pluck to say them *to* you. We all say that you make the very worst of yourself, and so you do.

MARION.

Providence did it for me.

BARBARA.

No, he didn't. You're simply lovely as Titania —you were ripping as Perdita last year—delicious as Audrey——.

MARION.

I can't take the footlights about with me very conveniently, you know.

BARBARA.

But you *could* do your hair decently, and dab a grain of powder on your nose and wear nice things. And *play up* a little. If I had never seen you act I would have sworn that you couldn't make a graceful movement to save your life.

MARION.

People who look like me are best when at their quietest.

BARBARA.

Oh, you're hopeless! And not to answer his perfectly civil letter is simply rude.

MARION.

Have answered it. Keep calm.

BARBARA.

You have? After all? What did you say?

MARION.

I said I was sorry that I couldn't arrange to see him as no one was admitted behind the scenes—not even dramatic critics from the great metropolis!

BARBARA.

And what else?

MARION.

Oh. I thanked him for all the kind things he said about my acting, and forebore to add that he was a short-sighted nincompoop—which was nice of me.

BARBARA.

I give you up. You're too awful. Don't you *like* making a conquest?

MARION.

Never done it.

BARBARA.

But you *have—now.*

MARION.

Not as myself—this is a do—a take in, as you'd call it in your more refined moments.

BARBARA.

Personally, I don't know how you manage to exist without—well—that sort of fun. *I* couldn't.

MARION.

You see you've always had it. There are two worlds, you know—the pretty girl's world, and the plain girl's. Pity they can't swop occasionally. If you were me for—say a week, I wonder what you'd make of it. No male eye would rest upon you for more than one disappointed second. Only the most good-natured men would speak to you—and then only out of pity. But you'd find the women wonderfully pleasant.

BARBARA.

You talk as if you were a golliwog.

MARION.

No—not a golliwog—just perfectly plain. From the male point of view, non-existent.

BARBARA.

Only because you insist on being a frump—that's what you are—an inveterate frump. And I'm off. Time's up.

MARION.

All right. [BARBARA *jumps up, takes flowers out of*

her hair, and begins to put on her hat and scarf-at glass.] I suppose I can't keep you. You're a good little cat to sit at all.

BARBARA.

[*Looking at picture.*] I say, it's getting on splendidly. Topping. You'll send it to the R.A. won't you ?

MARION.

As soon as ever the President comes and begs me for it, on his knees.

BARBARA.

[*Laughing.*] Toad ! I say—with or without this rag ? [*Taking scarf on and off at glass.*]

MARION.

[*Mock seriously.*] Give me half an hour's profound meditation and——. [*A bell rings.*] Hullo !

BARBARA.

Great Scott ! Visitors ?

MARION.

That'll be Maggie Fish. She's going to sit for the hair in " Springtide." Let her in, there's an angel—I'm full of paint—and tell her to wait in the porch for half a tick. I'll come out to her.

BARBARA.

Right oh ! And goodbye, frumpy dear.

MARION.

Goodbye—thanks most awfully. Enjoy yourself, and don't forget to-morrow morning—soon as you're up.

BARBARA.

[*Going.*] Right oh ! Tata. [*She goes.* MARION *wipes her hands on a rag and pushes easel against wall, humming a tune from Mendelssohn's "Midsummer Night's Dream." Re-enter* BARBARA *excitedly.*] It's him ! Keith Herald ! He's here ! With a bunch of flowers the size of I don't know what !

MARION.

No you don't, my dear.

BARBARA.

It's true—as true as truth. You've got to see to it, I'm off. I leave you to it. He's standing in the porch.

MARION.

Who did he ask for ?

BARBARA.

Miss Sawyer, of course, and I said you were in here.

MARION.

I won't see him.

BARBARA.

All right. Do as you like. I can't stop and parley—I shall leave him there—tootle-oo ! [*Goes.*]

MARION.

[*Angrily.*] Barbara ! [*No answer.* MARION *looks about her distractedly. Takes a rapid look at herself in the glass, then at her hands. Stands in concentrated thought for a moment, apparently takes a decision, and goes to door. Speaking out, quietly.*] Will you come in, please ?

KEITH.

[*Without.*] Oh, thanks. [*He enters, slightly embarrassed, carrying a large bunch of roses. He is a presentable young man, dressed in summer lounge suit. Looking round.*] Er—Miss Sawyer ?

MARION.

Which Miss Sawyer did you want to see ? There are two.

KEITH.

Miss Marion Sawyer.

MARION.

Oh, I'm sorry she's away. I'm her sister.

KEITH.

[*Disappointed.*] Oh—I see. I thought—er—that Miss Sawyer was in. I saw her act on Tuesday. I ought perhaps to say that I'm the dramatic critic for "The Morning News"—we always insert a fairly detailed notice of these charming theatricals——

MARION.

Yes, I know.

KEITH.

And this year I think the students have quite surpassed themselves. Er—were you in it?

MARION.

[*Squarely.*] Oh, no.

KEITH.

You don't share your sister's tastes in this respect?

MARION.

Not at all.

KEITH.

She has a very wonderful gift—I was tremendously struck with her talent and her charm and——.

MARION.

Yes, she's quite good at acting, isn't she—though I say it as shouldn't. Won't you sit down?

KEITH.

[*Sitting.*] Thanks. Oh, she's wonderful. I've never seen such acting off the professional boards—I might almost add "or on them." She means to go in for it, of course?

MARION.

To go on the stage? Oh, no. She paints—like me.

KEITH.

But surely—such a talent ought not to be wasted?

MARION.

She prefers painting.

KEITH.

Is it possible that she is equally talented in that branch of art?

MARION.

Well—I don't know—I'm not much of a judge—I mean I'm bound to be prejudiced. This is some of her work—if you'd care to look at it.

KEITH.

I should indeed.

MARION.

[*Showing sketches.*] These are done out of doors —and these are some heads done in the Life Class.

KEITH.

In the school here?

MARION.

Yes. Some of them are very rough, as you see——.

KEITH.

But they're strong—vigorous—aren't they? Of course, I don't know much about drawing or painting——.

MARION.

You know a lot about the stage, of course?

KEITH.

Well, if experience in watching plays goes for anything—but I may truthfully say that in the three years of my dramatic experience I've never come across a more charming, graceful, appealing personality than that of your sister. I hope you don't mind my speaking out like this?

MARION.

I'm delighted.

KEITH.

Her movements, her voice, her facial expression —everything. I'm greatly disappointed not to find her here to-day. I—I should have liked so much to tell her—has she gone for long?

MARION.

Oh, yes. Very long. She's—she's travelling about, you see—with friends.

KEITH.

I suppose—her letters will be forwarded? I should like to write what I am not privileged to say to her—

MARION.

Oh! Well—if you address the letter here—but I shouldn't trouble if I were you——.

KEITH.

Trouble?

MARION.

I mean—she's a very haphazard, happy-go-lucky sort of person——.

KEITH.

You mean she probably would not reply?

MARION.

Quite sure she wouldn't. She doesn't care a bit about praise and success and all that sort of thing—except in her painting. I'll tell her you liked that, if I may.

KEITH.

Oh, please do—but still—I think I'll write as well, just to give myself that pleasure, if you think she won't mind—won't consider it cheek.

MARION.

Oh, how could she? It's most kind of you.

KEITH.

Might I ask a favour of you?

MARION.

Certainly.

KEITH.

Will you drop me a line when she comes back? I should feel it a great honour to make her acquaintance.

MARION.

But you'll have forgotten all about her by the time she comes back. She'll be away—oh—months.

KEITH.

I can wait.

MARION.

[*Laughing a little.*] Perhaps you'll be disappointed when you see her *off* the stage.

KEITH.

I don't think so.

MARION.

You might think her quite plain.

KEITH.

Hardly.

MARION.

Marvels can be done with a good make-up box, you know.

KEITH.

She couldn't make up her voice, her grace——.

MARION.

Oh, yes! She may have put that on just as she puts on the paint.

KEITH.

[*Laughing.*] I'll take my chance of finding some of the charm left. You're—you're her elder sister?

MARION.

Much older.

KEITH.

Then you'll forgive me for having made you a confidant on sight in this rather —er—unconventional way ?

MARION.

Of course. I won't say a word to her about you, if you'd rather not.

KEITH.

I shall leave that entirely to your discretion. [*Rising.*] I'm afraid I've taken dreadful advantage of your kindness. I must be getting back to town in time for the first night of " Pots and Pans " at the " Princess's." [*Realizing his bunch of flowers.*] Oh —these few vegetables—I happened to see them on my way through the village—perhaps you would accept them as a token of gratitude.

MARION.

But they were meant for my sister—as a tribute of admiration.

KEITH.

But as she has flown——.

MARION.

I'll put them in water. Thank you.

KEITH.

That's very kind. Then—I think I mustn't keep you. Goodbye.

MARION.

Goodbye.

KEITH.

And thank you very much indeed.

MARION.

Not at all.

KEITH.

I hope we shall meet again. There will be a performance next year, of course?

MARION.

Of course. But I—my sister and I won't be here. I'm leaving the school at the end of the term.

KEITH.

Where shall I find you after that?

MARION.

I haven't an idea.

KEITH.

May I leave my card?

MARION.

Certainly.

KEITH.

[*Taking it from case and handing it to her.*] That address will always find me.

MARION.

Thanks so much.

KEITH.

And I shall hope to have a line on her return.

MARION.

I must try and remember. Goodbye again.

KEITH.

She's wonderful.

MARION.

I'm so glad.

KEITH.

I don't want to lose sight of her for good.

MARION.

No, no. Goodbye.

KEITH.

Goodbye, and thanks again. [*He goes.*]

[*She takes up the roses, smells them, sits looking at them for a while in silence, then throws them suddenly into a far corner, drops her head on her arms and sobs convulsively.*]

CURTAIN.

HER LADYSHIP'S JEWELS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LADY YARDLEY.

MR. JOHN CRIDOC (alias Smith, Jones, Brown, Robinson, &c., &c.).

FANSHAW.

SCENE:

Sitting-room of private suite in the Hotel Carlitz. Doors C. and R. Writing-table, sideboard, telephone, sofa, &c.

HER LADYSHIP'S JEWELS

LADY YARDLEY *is discovered at writing-table writing letters and smoking a cigarette. She wears an elaborate matinee.* [*The telephone bell rings.*]

LADY YARDLEY.

Blow! [*Crossing to telephone.*] That's the tenth time at least, since breakfast. If it goes once more I'll box its ears. [*At telephone.*] Well? —— Oh, Charlie! Yes, it's me. Lunch with who? —— No, I should hate it. I don't want to lunch out to-day. Want to keep myself fresh for to-night. —— No, I can't. My gown has come from Value's, and they're sending a woman specially to see it on me here this morning for one or two alterations. She may keep me till late.—Oh! tell him I was out when you telephoned.—The gown? Rather! Wait till you see me in it.—Oh, bother the bill!—What?—Oh, no, I won't forget. I was just on the point of telephoning to the Bank when you rang me up. Can't stop now. Heaps to do.—All right. Good-bye. [*Replaces receiver.*] There! If I hadn't clean forgotten about the Bank. Let's see—what's the number? [*Looks at letter on desk.*] 52077. [*At telephone.*] Gerrard 52077. [*To herself.*] Lucky that he reminded me. I'd have had the manager in

a taxi about my ears in another—— [*Into telephone.*] Oh! Can I speak to the manager? I'm Lady Yardley.—Oh, Mr. Gumbridge, I just wanted to explain why I'm not sending back the diamonds to-day. I'm keeping them to wear again to-night at a special function. I was going to have worn the copies, but Sir Charles would like me to wear the real stones, so I'll bring back the box myself to-morrow morning, and place it in your hands, on my way back to Riversfield. Will that be all right?—Thanks.—Yes.—Good-bye. [*Goes back to desk.*] I'll never get these notes written—never in life. All one's most important duties are scattered to the four winds by that fiendish bell. [*Shaking her fist at telephone.*] Haven't even had a moment for manicuring yet! [*Sits and takes up pen. Bell rings again. She treadles and whimpers with irritation.*] No, I won't! [*Calls.*] Fanshaw! She *never* hears me. I might be fainting. [*Crescendo.*] Fanshaw! Fanshaw!

[ENTER FANSHAW *with wine and sandwiches on a tray.*] For heaven's sake answer that, and say I'm dead! [*Takes sandwich from tray.*] It's as nearly true as no matter.

FANSHAW.

[*In highly genteel voice.*] Yes, my Lady. [*At telephone.*] Hullo!—Yes.—Who is it?—Yes.—Yes. Hold the line, please. I will inquire. [*To* LADY

YARDLEY.] It's the hairdresser, my Lady. He wants to know if he can come at six instead of six-thirty, as he has nine heads to-night.

LADY YARDLEY.

Good heavens! How horribly intemperate! Say yes, I'll be ready at six if I must, and I expect him to bring the tail and the new frame with him. If he forgets them, I'm lost.

FANSHAW.

[*Into telephone.*] Are you there?—Her Ladyship will be ready at six o'clock, and will you please remember the frail and the tame—— ?

LADY YARDLEY.

[*With a little scream.*] What are you saying?

FANSHAW.

[*Quite calmly.*] Sorry, my Lady. [*Into telephone.*] The tail and the frame. My error.—Thank you. —Good morning. [*Replaces receiver.*]

LADY YARDLEY.

Then I'll have my bath soon after tea, Fanshaw, and we'll try the new Eau d'Ivresse in it. Perhaps we'd better ring up Value's and ask at what time their Miss Griffin is likely to turn up here to see my gown on. One would like to get dressed some

time before lunch. [FANSHAW *goes towards telephone.*] No; leave it. I'm sick of the telephone. [*Throws herself on sofa, still nibbling a sandwich.*] It's broken up the best part of my morning as it is. Haven't even opened the papers yet, and can't dine out till I have. Here, Fanshaw. [*Throws her the papers.*] You can read out the headings whilst I do my nails. Give me my manicure things. [*Points to table.* FANSHAW *goes towards bedroom door R.*] There they are. [*Aside.*] Priceless idiot! [*Takes them from her.*] Now sit there, Fanshaw, and don't whisper. Skip the politics.

FANSHAW.

[*Reading paper in deliberate, mincing tones.*] "A Drunkard's Suicide."

LADY YARDLEY.

[*Busy on her nails.*] Don't be revolting, Fanshaw.

FANSHAW.

Sorry, my Lady. "Damage by Storm in the——"

LADY YARDLEY.

Pass that. I bar storms.

FANSHAW.

"Sporting Notes."

LADY YARDLEY.

No, thanks ; I'm sick to death of backing losers.

FANSHAW.

" The Church."

LADY YARDLEY.

Fanshaw !

FANSHAW.

" The Hotel Thief. Further Exploits."

LADY YARDLEY.

Good. Go on.

FANSHAW.

[*Reading.*] " Yet another has been added to the long list of remarkable coups "—[*pronounced cowps*]—

LADY YARDLEY.

Coups.

FANSHAW.

" Coops executed by the accomplished burglar, who has now baffled the police in three daring hotel-robberies, each of which was carried out with a fund of plausible stories and an aplomb—[*Anglicised pronunciation*]—which are truly amazing. Again

the victim is a well-known hostess in diplomatic circles, who is spending the regatta week at the King's Hotel, Henley. The servant who admitted the thief into her private apartments during her absence on the river describes him as a remarkably well-dressed and gentlemanly-looking man, answering in all respects to the description of the man who called at the Lion Hotel, Southsea, on the morning when Lady Thornby's magnificent pearls were missed from that establishment. The slight foreign accent was again noticed. It appears——"
[*Telephone bell rings again.*]

LADY YARDLEY.

Oh, that wretched bell!

FANSHAW.

Shall I go, my Lady?

LADY YARDLEY.

Of course. Quick!

FANSHAW.

[*At telephone.*] Hullo!—Yes. Oh, one moment, if you please. [*To* LADY YARDLEY.] It's someone at Value's, my Lady. Mr. Value is coming here himself.

LADY YARDLEY.

[*Springing up and scattering cushions and manicure instruments right and left.*] What! Hold the line! I'll speak to them. [*Dashes to telephone.*] Hullo!—Yes, I *am* Lady Yardley.—Oh, that's *very* good of him.—Oh, yes, I know it's one of his greatest triumphs; it only requires one or two trifling touches, I think.—Yes, I'll be here all this morning.—Oh, he's started already?—Yes.—Yes, of course I will. I'll be quite ready for him.—Thank you so much. [*Replaces receiver. Breathlessly to* FANSHAW, *who remains perfectly calm and impassive.*] Fanshaw! He's coming himself—the great Value himself! It's the biggest compliment I've ever had. I don't believe he's ever been to anyone less than a double duchess before. I've never even set eyes on him. Now, keep calm, Fanshaw. Don't lose your head. I'll see him in here. [*Picking up sofa cushions, manicure things, &c., and throwing them into place.*] Put all this straight. Don't stand there. He's on his way *now*, and I haven't a moment to lose. Daren't keep him waiting—not a second. Tell them to show him straight in here. But first get me into the gown. Quick! [*Dashes into bedroom, door R., followed by* FANSHAW. *Short pause.*]

[ENTER JOHN CRIDOC, *door C. He is dressed in morning coat, silk hat, gloves. Clean-shaven. He closes*

the door with extreme rapidity, looks about him. Comes forward and listens at door R. Moves quickly and nimbly about the room. Opens every drawer of writing-desk. Mutters to himself at their contents. Looks at bunch of seals on table. Replaces them with grimace. Is just about to inspect silver candlestick on mantlepiece when RE-ENTER LADY YARDLEY *in magnificent evening dress with diamond necklace, tiara, ear-rings, &c.*]

JOHN CRIDOC.

[*Coming towards her with a bland smile, and speaking with slight French accent.*] Ah, forgive my——

LADY YARDLEY.

[*Simultaneously.*] Oh, here you are already, Monsieur Value! I didn't hear you come; and I've just sent my maid down to give orders about showing you up.

JOHN CRIDOC.

[*Starting.*] Showing me—ah, yes! I have this moment come——

LADY YARDLEY.

It's *most* good of you to come yourself. I really feel it to be quite an honour. I know how dreadfully busy you must be just now—the middle of the

season—and I hadn't for a moment expected you in person. I thought one of your fitters——

JOHN CRIDOC.

I prefer to come myself when the occasion justifies.

LADY YARDLEY.

I'm delighted; and I want you to understand that I like the gown immensely. It's adorable, and so surprisingly comfortable in some places. But I have just one or two tiny suggestions to make, if you'll promise to tell me quite candidly if I'm mistaken.

JOHN CRIDOC.

That I can promise. I am used to saying what I think, madame, on this subject.

LADY YARDLEY.

I'm so glad. Now, I'd just like to see if anything strikes you before I say another word. [*She turns slowly round before him.*]

JOHN CRIDOC.

If you will walk slowly backwards and forwards before me I will decide in a few moments. The general effect is excellent. It is a great—a grand creation. [*Throwing himself on to sofa in easy attitude.*] Now then, please. Slowly to the window.

[*She obeys.*] Good! Turn round. Raise the right arm slightly. Ah, the sleeve—perhaps—. Now the left arm. No, it is good. Come back. Stand still. Um! You were perhaps going to suggest a pompom——

LADY YARDLEY.

A what? You're laughing at me, Monsieur Value.

JOHN CRIDOC.

[*Nervously.*] Quite true. Quite true.

LADY YARDLEY.

But seriously, now, does anything strike you?

JOHN CRIDOC.

I cannot be serious unless I smoke, unfortunately. Perhaps madame has a cigarette or cigar at hand?

LADY YARDLEY.

Oh, of course. How thoughtless of me. My husband has some very excellent cigars—where are they?—here—and I don't mind cigar-smoke in the very least. Won't you take one of these? [*Hands him the box.*]

JOHN CRIDOC.

Ah, I will accept one with many thanks. [*Slips*

a handful into his pocket as she turns away.] If I may trouble you for a light ?

LADY YARDLEY.

Certainly. [*Hands him gold matchbox at which he looks closely.*] And won't you have a whiskey and soda ? It's all here.

JOHN CRIDOC.

I have very little time, unhappily. Always rushed. But if it is quite handy——

LADY YARDLEY.

Here it is. [*Pours out at sideboard. He slips matchbox into his pocket.*] And then you will be able to give me your most serious opinion, won't you ? I do want this gown to be a sensation—to make a furore, and for that it must be absolutely perfect, mustn't it ?

JOHN CRIDOC.

[*Taking whiskey.*] It shall be absolutely perfect, for my own sake.

LADY YARDLEY.

Of course, we both want it to succeed, don't we ? It'll be a wonderful gathering at the Embassy—everybody who matters will be there. Now, I'll

tell you what I thought myself, and you mustn't be too severe if I'm wrong. I thought this piece of incrustation seemed just a trifle—er—*much*, if you know what I mean—a little overweights the——

JOHN CRIDOC.

Excuse me, madame, that is where you make a mistake. The lincrusta—the asbestos—the—er—fireworks are not too much; it is the diamonds that give the overloaded effect. This, you understand, is a gown that should stand alone. It is perfect in itself. It is a masterpiece. Not everybody could wear it. You can. You were made for that gown. But such a creation must be treated with respect. The diamonds are, no doubt, beautiful in themselves. With this gown they are a mistake —a *bourgeois* impertinence. At the Embassy every woman will be blazing with diamonds. They will be common as daisies in a field. How much more effective, how much more *distingue* to wear none, to——

LADY YARDLEY.

Oh, but Sir Charles was particularly anxious that I should wear them to-night!

JOHN CRIDOC.

[*Rising and bristling.*] Oh, if Sir Charles knows

better than me—of course I give in—I give up—— [*Takes up his hat.*]

LADY YARDLEY.

Oh, please don't say that, Monsieur Value. Please wait. Of course, I needn't wear them——

JOHN CRIDOC.

You have—I mean, if you happen to have something a little quieter in effect—a rope of pearls, for instance——

LADY YARDLEY.

I have. Shall I fetch them ?

JOHN CRIDOC.

[*Sitting again.*] First let me see the effect with no jewels whatever. Beauty unadorned——

LADY YARDLEY.

Certainly. [*Takes off necklace and places it on table. He licks his lips.*] Perhaps without the riviere, but with the tiara alone—— ?

JOHN CRIDOC.

Let me see you without either—and without the ear-rings.

LADY YARDLEY.

[*Placing them beside the necklace.*] There! Is that really better?

JOHN CRIDOC.

[*Critically.*] A shade—the merest shade, too—*ingenue*, perhaps. If you will fetch the pearls at once——

LADY YARDLEY.

Of course—I won't keep you a moment. [EXIT *quickly, R.*]

JOHN CRIDOC.

[*Whipping the diamonds into a back pocket.*] Quite true, *chere amie*—you won't keep me a moment. [*Moves noiselessly and swiftly to door C. Turns and makes a low bow towards door R.*] Adieu, madame! *Et merci.* [EXIT.]

[RE-ENTER LADY YARDLEY, *fastening on a rope of pearls.*]

LADY YARDLEY.

Here they are. I hope you'll——[*Sees that he is gone.*] Hullo! What an extraordinary thing! Gone—without a——

[ENTER FANSHAW, *door C.*]

FANSHAW.

They'll show him up directly, my Lady.

LADY YARDLEY.

He's been. He was here one minute ago. I only left him to run and get these pearls as quickly as I could. Really these men dress-makers—spoiled is a poor word. Why, you must have passed him.

FANSHAW.

I saw a gentleman running along the passage in a great hurry, my Lady, but they said downstairs that Mr. Value had just come, so——

LADY YARDLEY.

Just gone—and without even troubling to say Good-morning. Really!

FANSHAW.

They must have made a mistake. They are all so very offhand down there.

LADY YARDLEY.

Well, I may as well take this off. He was satisfied with the gown, but didn't approve of the diamonds —wouldn't have them at any price. Just bring them and put them away again, Fanshaw. [*Goes to door R., muttering to herself.*] Extraordinary behaviour!

FANSHAW.

[*Looking about.*] Where are they, my Lady?

LADY YARDLEY.

[*At door.*] On the table.

FANSHAW.

I don't see them.

LADY YARDLEY.

[*Coming back—aside.*] Deaf *and* blind! [*Sees that they are gone—looks about the room and suddenly staggers back.*] Fanshaw! Fanshaw!

FANSHAW.

[*Alarmed.*] Oh, my Lady, what is it?

LADY YARDLEY.

They're gone! Stolen! He's taken them!

FANSHAW.

Oh, it couldn't be him—Mr. Value himself!

LADY YARDLEY.

Could it—*was* it him? Can it have been—— Fanshaw! The hotel thief! [*Collapses on the chair.*]

FANSHAW.

Oh, my Lady! What shall we do?

LADY YARDLEY.

[*Faintly.*] Give me something—quick!

FANSHAW.

[*Rushing to fill glass from the tray.*] Oh, what *shall* we do? Don't go off, my Lady. You're not going off?

LADY YARDLEY.

[*To herself, sipping hysterically.*] What will Charlie say? What will he say? [*To* FANSHAW.] Ring the bell—ring!

FANSHAW.

[*Ringing.*] He'll say what a mercy I didn't put you on the real diamonds.

LADY YARDLEY.

[*Jumping up with a scream.*] What! Were those the copies?

FANSHAW.

Yes! Yes!

LADY YARDLEY.

Oh, why didn't you say that at once? [*Laughing and crying hysterically.*] He's got the imitations—it *was* the hotel thief, and he's sold! Sold! Sold! Oh, how splendid! Ring again! Give the alarm! I'm all right!

[FANSHAW *flies back to bell.* LADY YARDLEY *bursts into fresh hysterics.*]

CURTAIN.

MRS. MARLOWE'S CASE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MR. ROBERT MARLOWE.

KITTY [*His Wife*).

MR. CORNELIUS KEMP.

SCENE : *Mr. Kemp's Study, in New York.*

TIME : *A Spring Afternoon.*

MRS. MARLOWE'S CASE

MR. KEMP, *a studious looking man of about sixty, is discovered writing intently at his desk, which is laden with books and papers. The room is furnished in simple and quiet bachelor taste.* KITTY'S *voice is heard without.*

KITTY.

[*Without.*] All right, Mrs. Murphy. I'll go in, thanks. Don't you trouble.

[ENTER KITTY. *She is about twenty-five and very pretty, but absurdly fashionable in dress, with huge hat, gorgeous handbag, etc.*]

Can I come in, uncle?

CORNELIUS.

[*Jumping up.*] Hullo! You, Kitty? Come in, come in. This *is* a surprise.

KITTY.

A nice one?

CORNELIUS.

I should think so. [*He tries, first on one side and*

then on the other, to kiss her under her huge hat. Business.] Dear me, these forbidding hats! [*Kisses her hand instead.*]

KITTY.

[*Laughing.*] I call this my chaperone.

CORNELIUS.

I see. Chapeau. Chaperone. Well, well. And what have you been doing all this time?

KITTY.

Meaning to come in and see you ever so often and being prevented every time—I've been so furiously busy. You know what it is at this time of the year—stores, and dress-makers, and operations, and bridge. Rushing here and dashing there, and late for everything, and never a moment to fetch a breath——

CORNELIUS.

[*Placing a chair.*] Well, sit down and fetch one now. I was afraid you had got caught up in the machinery.

KITTY.

[*Putting up her veil.*] Of course I had, the moment I set foot in New York again.

CORNELIUS.

That's right. Let's have a look at you.

KITTY.

Oh, please don't. I look like a sick monkey at dawn, *I* know. It isn't exactly becoming to be worried to the verge of lunacy, as I have been these last few days. It's enough to make an old hag of one.

CORNELIUS.

Too much dissipation, eh ?

KITTY.

[*Hotly.*] Well, if you call it dissipation to find your cook lying under the dresser fast asleep on the night of your dinner-party, with a roast chicken in one hand and a hymn book in the other; and if it's dissipation to lose nine rubbers of bridge in one afternoon, when you're playing for five-dollar points; and if it's dissipation to be told by your own husband—well, that's just what I'm here for, what I've come to tell you about—or burst. Yes, I'm sorry, uncle Corney, but you're the head of the family and a man of law, and you've just got to see me through this circus or I won't answer for *what* I shall do. So now you know.

CORNELIUS.

I'm afraid I don't know much—so far.

KITTY.

I'm here to tell you everything—straight out, and the long and the short of it is [*slapping the table vehemently*] that *it can't go on*, and that's all about it.

CORNELIUS.

I'm afraid I don't know yet what has begun.

KITTY.

[*With desperate fluency.*] Why, everything. I'm not going to stand by and see myself made miserable and my hair turned grey and my complexion ruined, not by any man who walks this earth. As I say, I'm not yet twenty-five [*jumping up and pacing excitedly*] and I refuse to sit down and see my life hashed up under my very nose. Nobody need expect it. We've only got one life to live, so far as I know, and it's not on appro. So it's just *got* to be a success, and it's up to me to see that it *is* a success, and I'm going to do it. So now. [*Plumps down on chair again.*]

CORNELIUS.

But dear me, I thought you were as happy as a bird, and Robert too.

KITTY.

So we were—before he took to having these fits of suicidal sulks. You should have seen him when he went off to the office this morning. Why, you wouldn't have hung your hat on him. He looked more like a dead fish than a live man. I simply——

CORNELIUS.

No trouble at the office, I hope?

KITTY.

Not an ounce. That's the beauty of it. The more money we have to spend, the gloomier he seems to get.

CORNELIUS.

Looks as if you didn't spend it just as he would wish.

KITTY.

But if I didn't spend it on one thing I'd have to spend it on another, wouldn't I? Seems to me he's got no more logic than a boiled egg. "I want you to spend reasonably," he says. And what's spending reasonably, I should like to know? Does he want me to buy a hospital, or a bale of umbrellas, or what? I think he's graduating for an asylum. That's what it is.

CORNELIUS.

But when you were first married, if I remember rightly, you said——

KITTY.

Oh, it was different then, of course. He let me do just exactly what I liked. And it suited him a lot better, *I* could tell him.

CORNELIUS.

I'm afraid he spoilt you some.

KITTY.

Why, that first year he hadn't anything like the income he has now, and I was obliged to keep fairly quiet, and do without theatre-parties and specialists, and bridge, and so on. But now that we *are* well off and I *can* enjoy myself, what on earth does he want to interfere for? It's perfectly ridiculous. It's preposterous. *I* never interfere with *his* clothes and *his* amusements and things. Why, he may wear a blanket, if he likes, and play marbles. I believe in the liberty of the subject, married or unmarried, male or female. What do you think he said yesterday? That this hat was an outrage! and this gown a caricature! And this [*showing bag*] a buffoonery—my best bridge-bag a buffoonery! And I'm not to fix my hair this way, if you please. If that isn't the last straw!

46635

CORNELIUS.

Straws in your hair?

KITTY.

Don't joke, uncle, it's serious. And it's not the only thing. For instance,——

CORNELIUS.

Ah, I was afraid there was an instance.

KITTY.

I'm to spend more time at home, and run after the servants, and sit by the fire and yawn in the evening. And I'm not to know so-and-so, and I'm not to go here, and not to go there. And *that* isn't the worst of it.

CORNELIUS.

Ah, I was afraid there was a worst.

KITTY.

[*Jumping up again.*] I'm not to play so much bridge, if you please. And I'm to give up the bridge-club altogether!! What do you think of *that?* And why? Because he doesn't approve of the club set, and because it takes up too much of my time. Did you ever hear of such tyranny?

Primitive—prehistoric. That's what it is. And as I happen to be this century, and the second best player in the club, I can't and won't stand it, and that's all about it. So you've just got to help me, Uncle Corney. You will, won't you?

CORNELIUS.

What is it that you want me to do, my dear? It seems to me——

KITTY.

See Bob.

CORNELIUS.

Glad to see Bob at any time.

KITTY.

I mean at once, and seriously. You must talk to him.

CORNELIUS.

What about?

KITTY.

Tell him that I'm determined on a divorce

CORNELIUS.

On what grounds exactly?

KITTY.

Incompatibility of taste and temper. He completely lost his temper this morning.

CORNELIUS.

Very bad taste.

KITTY.

Disgraceful. He had been looking more and more like a thunderclap all through breakfast.

CORNELIUS.

How do thunder-claps look?

KITTY.

And finally it burst. He wouldn't stand this rotten, raffish life any longer. We would leave New York right now and settle down in the country. I was getting myself talked about. Have you ever heard such rubbish?

CORNELIUS.

[*Gently.*] You're quite sure it was rubbish? Absolutely nothing in it? Or was there just a glimmer of truth? Sit down again, my dear. [*She sits down reluctantly.*] and listen to an old friend who has lived nearly three times as long as you

have. Your husband is a straight man—unless he's changed completely since I last saw him—and he works pretty hard, grinding in that office from morning till night, from all I hear. Is it very unreasonable if he wants a little quiet home life, and congenial friends, and a moderately sensible outlay of his hard-earned money? Why, you yourself would probably enjoy your pleasures doubly if there were a few pauses in them.

[*Hoarse cries of a paper-boy heard without in the distance.*]

KITTY.

There *are* pauses—of course. Why, I had the most monumental headache I ever died of, only last week. Couldn't raise my head from the pillow. And all he said was that he was very sorry, but I had brought it on myself. If you can't count on the sympathy of your husband—well, where are you? Brutal, I call it. He's turning into a professional bully, that's what he's doing. And a gloomy bully at that. I could bear it better if he just lashed out now and then, and laughed between-whiles. But to see him sulk and worry, and worry and sulk—no, it can *not* be stood. He's *im*possible. He's three miles beyond the limit. He's the worst thing out—a spoil-sport and a bore. And I'm to face life in the country with him?

Nót I! I never undertook to be a parsnip—not to please any man. So we must just part. [*The voice without grows louder.*] What's that they're calling out? Sounds like a fire. Do open the window and let's hear.

CORNELIUS.

[*Opening the window.*] The usual little fraud, I expect.

[*The voice without is heard distinctly calling "Disastrous fire in forty-seventh street. Shocking scenes. Heroic action of the firemen. Sensational fire in an office," etc., repeated until the voice dies away.*]

KITTY.

[*Excitedly, at the window.*] Oh, do get a paper, uncle. There's nothing so thrilling as a fire—[*checking herself*] I mean, so dreadful. Can you catch the boy?

CORNELIUS.

[*Going out quickly.*] I dare say Mrs. Murphy has collared him already. [*Outside the door.*] Oh, thanks, Mrs. Murphy. That's just what I was going to ask you for. [*Re-entering and unfolding newspaper.*] Latest edition. Now then. Prepare

for a disappointment. Here we are. [*Reads.*] "Big fire at——" [*Dropping the paper.*] Good Lord!

KITTY.

[*Snatching the paper from him.*] Where? Let me look. Not at—— [*With a shriek.*] Ah, it is! I knew it! Bob's office! and he's there. [*Her hands shake violently.*] Oh, take it. Read it. I can't hold it still.

CORNELIUS.

I'll read it first to myself.

KITTY.

No, no. Read it out. I can't see. [*She tears her hat off and throws it down.*] Oh, quick, for mercy's sake!

CORNELIUS.

[*Reading out in quick short breaths.*] "At three o'clock this afternoon a disastrous fire broke out at Messrs. Marlowe & Glover's offices in forty-seventh street, through the fusing, it is believed, of an electric wire. The flames, starting on the third floor, spread upwards with amazing rapidity——"

KITTY.

[*Breathlessly.*] He's on the fourth floor, Go on, go on.

CORNELIUS.

[*Reading.*] "And soon assumed terrific proportions. Five men were seriously injured before the flames could be got under by the heroic efforts of the firemen——" [*He pauses.*]

KITTY.

Is that all? [*Pause.*] It isn't. Go on.

CORNELIUS.

[*Reading reluctantly.*] "Mr. Glover was luckily absent, but Mr. Marlowe, junior——"

KITTY.

[*Clutching his arm.*] Oh, wait. Go on.

CORNELIUS.

"——junior is said to have been in his office at the time, and has not been traced since he was seen at an upper window doing some gallant rescue work and battling with the flames where the danger was greatest. He saved many lives by his indomitable pluck, but it is greatly feared——"

KITTY.

[*Reeling.*] Oh, Bob—I can't—— [*She totters.*]

CORNELIUS.

[*Grasping a chair and gently letting her down on it.*] The worst may not have happened. Reporters always blunder. Don't give up hope. We must go there at once. I'll go for news. You wait here. I'll come back as soon as I've heard——

KITTY.

[*Rocking herself and wailing.*] Oh, wait! What shall I do, what *shall* I do? To have said all those dreadful things about him at the very time that he —— Oh, no, I can't bear it—I can't. Bob, Bob! [*She breaks into violent sobs.*]

CORNELIUS.

[*Very gently.*] Control yourself, my dear. Show yourself to be a real woman, just as he was a real man. Now's your time. There may be a lot for you to do. Come!

KITTY.

[*Between her sobs.*] It's *too* cruel. It's *too* horrible. How am I to bear myself?

CORNELIUS.

[*Patting her shoulder.*] Come, come, little woman.

KITTY.

Oh, don't touch me! It's my punishment. Oh, Bob, Bob! And you can't come back to forgive me. [*She throws herself on to the couch and buries her face in a paroxysm of grief. He paces helplessly.*]

[*The door opens.* ENTER ROBERT MARLOWE *with hat and gloves. He is a man of about thirty, good-looking but depressed. He pauses in the doorway with a start of surprise on seeing his wife.*]

ROBERT.

Hullo! You here?

KITTY.

[*Jumping up with a shriek of joy.*] Bob!

CORNELIUS.

[*Wringing his hand emotionally.*] Thank God! [*He goes to window at back and wipes his brow.*]

KITTY.

[*Hurling herself into her husband's arms.*] Oh, Bob, Bob, Bob! It isn't really you!

ROBERT.

I rather thought it was. But what's up?

KITTY.

You're safe, safe! You're not hurt?

ROBERT.

Hurt? Why on earth——

KITTY.

[*Laughing and crying hysterically.*] And I thought —oh, I don't deserve it—I mean—oh, Bob! It's *really* you? Say it is.

ROBERT.

[*Calmly.*] Would somebody be so kind as to tell me what this is all about?

KITTY.

The fire! the awful fire!

CORNELIUS.

[*Showing him the newspaper.*] Don't be too modest, Bob. We've just read the account, and [*wringing his hand again*] I'm proud of you.

[ROBERT *glances quickly through paper.*]

KITTY.

You're just the most wonderful hero! If he's proud of you, I'm—I'm bursting!

ROBERT.

[*Throwing down paper.*] But this is all poppycock—as usual—reporter's twaddle. As I came along here I heard there had been a fire at Frister & Boodles' next door to us, but that the damage was slight and the loss trifling.

KITTY.

[*Delightedly.*] Then it wasn't at your office at all?

ROBERT.

I'm telling you——

CORNELIUS.

And you weren't even there?

ROBERT.

I'm afraid I was fast asleep in my study at home. I got back early and——

KITTY.

[*Embracing him violently.*] Oh, thank heaven! how clever of you!

ROBERT.

It wasn't really difficult. [*Looking more tenderly at her.*] And you got scared for nothing, did you? I'm sorry for that, little girl. [*Picking up paper again.*] My country!—these reporters!

CORNELIUS.

[*Aside to* KITTY *after a quiet chuckle.*] You wanted me to have a talk with Bob. Shall I take this opportunity ?

KITTY.

[*Aside to* CORNELIUS.] How can you be so cruel—so wicked—when he's just rescued from the jaws of death !

CORNELIUS.

I apologise, my dear.

KITTY.

[*To* ROBERT.] And how did you know I was here ?

ROBERT.

[*Embarrassed.*] Well, as a matter of fact I didn't. [*To* CORNELIUS.] I just looked in to ask your advice on—on a matter—a private matter, which [*looking at* KITTY] well, I don't know that it matters any more.

KITTY.

[*Bristling.*] You were coming to talk about me ! Bob ! I know it ! And here was Uncle Corney going to make no end of mischief between man and wife. [*To* CORNELIUS.] I'd never have believed it of you, Uncle Corney. [*To Bob.*] Why, it isn't safe for us to be here. We'll go home this minute.

[*To* CORNELIUS.] And next time you try to cook the peace and happiness of a married couple, just you pick one somewhere else. Disgraceful! that's what it is. But you haven't succeeded this time. Bob, take me away. [*To herself.*] Where's that tom-fool of a hat of mine? And my beastly bag?

ROBERT.

[*Laughing.*] And buy you something pretty at Tiffany's, eh?—to commemorate that awful fire.

KITTY.

[*Pinning her hat on back to front.*] No, dear. I won't let you. We'll go straight home. I've got just everything I want in this world and a lot besides; and anyway I'm all shaky, and not a grain of powder left on my face. [*To* CORNELIUS.] I'll try and forgive you, uncle, but it will take some doing. [*To* BOB.] Come along, honey, before he does any worse—wicked old sinner!

[*She drags* ROBERT *off by one hand. He holds out the other to* CORNELIUS *who presses it heartily and stands in the centre of stage chuckling delightedly as they disappear.*]

[CURTAIN.]

PRESSING ENGAGEMENTS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MR. CHARLES MURRAY.

MISS AGNES MURRAY [*his sister*].

MR. JACK MURRAY [*their orphan nephew*].

SIR DESMOND LOWE.

PECKER [*a Parlourmaid*],
and
FAY LEIGHTON.

SCENE: *The* MURRAYS' *Drawing-room in Hampstead. A comfortably and tastefully furnished room. Doors R. and L. Window L. Fireplace R.*

PRESSING ENGAGEMENTS

The curtain rises on CHARLES, AGNES *and* JACK. CHARLES *is about fifty; gray hair, smoking jacket and slippers. He is snoring loudly in front of the fire. His book and pipe have fallen by his side.*

AGNES *is about forty to forty-five, mildly artistic in appearance. She is seated by the table embroidering.*

JACK *is an average youth of eighteen. He sits at the piano, playing a popular tune execrably and out of time.*

JACK.

[*Rising abruptly.*] Oh, I say. If uncle can't snore in time to a simple two-step, I chuck it. I'm off to the rink. [*He picks up a pair of roller-skates, crosses to the window and looks out.*] It's stopped snowing anyway.

AGNES.

You're out to dinner, aren't you?

JACK.

Yes, at the—— I say, there's a taxi at the door.

Someone's getting out. Such a stunner. Driver's having a good look at her.

AGNES.

A visitor—so late? Charles, you'd better take those awful slippers out of sight.

CHARLES.

[*Starting up and collecting his pipe, etc.*] What's this?

AGNES.

A visitor. Who is it, Jack?

JACK.

Couldn't see through her hat, and she's gone in now. Had a brown bag.

AGNES.

[*To* JACK.] Someone for you, I expect.

[ENTER PECKER L.

PECKER.

[*Announcing with a bright smile.*] Miss Fay.

[EXIT PECKER.]

AGNES.

[*Jumping up delightedly.*] Fay! Well! this *is* a surprise!

CHARLES.

[*Simultaneously.*] By Jove, little Fay!

JACK.

I say!

[ENTER FAY *tempestuously. She is seventeen and very pretty. Luxuriously dressed in latest fashion. Huge hat, muff, etc.*]

FAY.

[*Rushing up to* AGNES *and hugging her.*] Darling, how are you?

AGNES.

Enchanted to see you.

FAY.

[*To* CHARLES, *taking both his hands.*] And Toodles!

CHARLES.

Well, this is very nice indeed.

FAY.

And Jack! [*Shakes hands.*]

JACK.

[*Gaping admiringly.*] I never recognised you from the window.

FAY.

Didn't you? How clever! [*To* AGNES.] You don't mind my blowing in like this without a word of warning, do you, dear? I didn't know I was coming myself, or I would have rung you up. But some dreadfully important things have been happening, and I wanted your advice *very* badly, so I just jumped into a taxi on the spur of the moment, directly after lunch——

AGNES.

But it hasn't taken you all this time to come from Hyde Park in a taxi?

FAY.

Oh no, I had to do a dressmaker on the way, and a hairdresser. And darling, do you mind? I've brought a bag with just the necessaries for the night *in case* you'd like to put me up for a tiny stay. I——I don't want to be at home just for the next few days.

AGNES.

Of course we'll put you up. Joyfully. [*Rings.*] But there's nothing wrong at home, I hope? no illness?

FAY.

No illness. But everything just about as wrong

as it can possibly be. You've got to hear all about it presently.

CHARLES.

We'd been wondering why we hadn't heard for so long.

AGNES.

And dying to see you again. Have you had tea?

FAY.

Heaps of tea, thanks. Shan't want any more for years.

CHARLES.

Let me take your coat.

JACK.

Oh, let me. . . . . [*He helps her off with it.*]

FAY.

Thank you. What a lovely fire! [*To* JACK.] Are you going skating?

JACK.

Well, not exactly.

AGNES.

You were just off for the evening, weren't you, Jack?

JACK.

Oh, I think it's rather too beastly wet. I'll chuck it.

[ENTER PECKER L.]

AGNES.

Oh, Pecker, Miss Fay has come to stay for a few days. Please let Knowles unpack the bag and light a big fire in the spare room.

PECKER.

Very good, ma'am. [EXIT.]

FAY.

[*To* AGNES.] I *must* speak to you, darling. Shall we go up now?

CHARLES.

This is the biggest fire in the house. Stay here and chat. Come along, Jack. We'll clear out.

FAY.

Oh, that's too bad.

CHARLES.

Not a bit of it.

[EXIT R. *laughing and followed by Jack who looks back at Fay, and barges into the furniture as he goes.*]

FAY.

[*Laughing.*] I see Jack hasn't got over his habit of staring. [*Throws off hat.*] Oh, darling, if I don't tell you everything this minute, something will snap.

AGNES.

[*Sitting on sofa.*] Well, what is it?

FAY.

[*Sitting beside her.*] Oh, I'm in such boiling water. I don't know what to do, and I can't do it anyway.

AGNES.

Begin at the beginning.

FAY.

There *is* no beginning and no end. It's all middle and hopeless. That's why I've run away. Fact is—— [*with a rush*] I'm engaged to be married.

AGNES.

Fay! And you never told us? Who to?

FAY.

Edward—Lord Wimpole. It was too silly to write about. And the beastly old wedding is fixed for June.

AGNES.

My dear child!

FAY.

It is beastly. What's the good of pretending? At least, it would be if it came off, but it shan't.

AGNES.

[*Holding her hand.*] Do try to be a little lucid, dearest.

FAY.

I will. I'm making your head ache. Let me think. Yes. The other muddle started at school—I mean in the holidays on the Rhine. I got engaged there to Adolf—Herr Leutnant Adolf von Kustner, if you want the whole of it. He really wasn't so bad at first—quite smart and handsome, and all that. German officers sometimes are, you know. And I wasn't at all up in engagements. But of course I saw it must be private, because first engagements always are, and I was only sixteen and didn't want to get into a row at school. But

somehow I didn't seem to care much about him when I got home, so I made my letters rather cool, and took it for granted that the silly business would fizzle out, like that [*with a gesture*]. You understand, don't you, darling?

AGNES.

[*Doubtfully.*] Well——

FAY.

And then I got engaged to Edward. And I wish I hadn't. He's hideous.

AGNES.

Why did you do it, then?

FAY.

My step-mother did it. She's frightfully keen on the whole thing. Keeps harping on the Wimpole diamonds and the historic estates, and the dirty old house in Park Lane, and all the rest of it. I think she wants to get rid of me.

AGNES.

And what does the German officer say to it?

FAY.

Well, that's just the trouble. Instead of taking it

nicely like a gentleman, he writes the most furious and passionate letters—in such rotten English too, that they make me hoot—says he won't give me up, threatens to come to London and see my people, and what not.

AGNES.

Surely his military duties——

FAY.

Oh, he's on the sick-list, worse luck. Fought a silly duel—about me, you know, just because I got engaged to my music-master over there. The whole thing only lasted a week. [AGNES *throws up her eyes.*] But isn't it awful?

AGNES.

And you love neither of them?

FAY.

My dear darling! [*Showing a locket.*] There, that's Edward's miniature, a present from his mother. Isn't it a scream? And they've left out the squint and the awful slang. [AGNES *starts visibly on looking at it.*] Can you wonder that I ran away from that?

AGNES.

Ran away? Do you mean that your people don't know where you are?

FAY.

Only Barton knows, and I've given her two hats not to let on. But I've left a letter for papa, saying that I was going to be with friends and would be quite all right, and another for Edward, saying that I must be left alone for a while to think things over, and that——

[ENTER PECKER L.]

PECKER.

Knowles has unpacked your bag, Miss, and says is there some more luggage coming?

FAY.

Oh! [*To* AGNES.] I was going to send for some things to-morrow, if you kept me, darling.

AGNES.

I see.

PECKER.

What'll you do for to-night, Miss?

FAY.

I've brought the necessaries, Pecker, in the bag.

PECKER.

Knowles says there's only a bottle of scent, some jewellery and a box of caramels—and a pink silk—er—wrap.

FAY.

[*With dignity.*] Nightgown.

AGNES.

[*Laughing.*] I'll lend Miss Fay everything she

PECKER.

Very good, Miss. [EXIT, *smiling discreetly.*]

AGNES.

Well, so far I gather you are more or less engaged to two men at the same time.

FAY.

And *that's* not the worst of it by a long way.

AGNES.

You're not engaged to a third?

FAY.

No, but—— [*Throwing her arms round* AGNES *in a sudden ecstasy.*] Oh, darling, he's too sweet!

AGNES.

Who?

FAY.

The other one. I can't tell you much just yet. But his eyelashes are simply dark blue silk, and he's too captivating for words. You'd adore him too. I know you would.

AGNES.

Who is he? Where have you met him?

FAY.

You see—it's very difficult—I'm not able to tell anything more. It's dreadful. I can't think how it happened. I thought it never *did* happen except in books.

AGNES.

Make a clean breast of it, Fay. Perhaps I can help you.

FAY.

Promise not to be angry?

AGNES.

Am I ever angry with you?

FAY.

No. But I've never before—I—oh—it's papa's chauffeur!

AGNES.

Good gracious!

FAY.

Isn't it awful? [*Covers her face with her hands and looks up beaming.*] And isn't it wonderful? I'm so happy and so miserable. What shall I do? I haven't told a soul.

AGNES.

No wonder you ran away. Of course Lord Wimpole doesn't know?

FAY.

Oh, good heavens, no! Think what he'd say. And my step-mamma. [*Mimicking.*] "Oh, if you prefer to be Mrs. Bloggins of Clapham——"

AGNES.

Bloggins!

FAY.

Oh, I've told you the name! But now you know his one and only drawback. All the rest is simply glorious.

AGNES.

Only the name—and—er—social standing.

FAY.

People *have* run away with their grooms and chauffeurs. But I don't say I'd like to do that. In fact, I wouldn't for worlds. So I bolted. It was very strong and fine of me, really. I hope you see that, darling.

AGNES.

Of course. Has he ever said anything?

FAY.

Well, now and then—trifles.

AGNES.

You're not going to write to him?

FAY.

No, honour bright, I'm not. I'm going to do nothing all the time but think about forgetting him completely—though I know I never shall. Don't

tell anyone but Toodles. I want him to know. I mean about everything.

[ENTER JACK R.]

JACK.

[*Backing.*] Oh, you're still busy? I thought perhaps——

AGNES.

Come in, Jack. I'm just going to see your uncle for a moment, [*Aside to* FAY] and get his advice.

FAY.

Thank you, darling.

[EXIT AGNES R.]

JACK.

[*Beaming.*] May I sit here?

FAY.

[*Smiling.*] It's not my sofa.

JACK.

[*Handing her sweets.*] Have a caramel?

FAY.

[*Taking one.*] Oh, ta.

JACK.

I always keep this kind on tap since you said you liked them. I like them too. [*Takes one.*]

FAY.

[*Laughing.*] Do you really? *How* lucky.

JACK.

I wish you didn't always laugh at me. I can't tell you how I feel, but—one day I shall very likely shoot myself.

FAY.

When I've taken all the trouble to teach you the Boston? Wicked waste, I call that.

JACK.

You may laugh, but you'll see. I never got a wink of sleep all night after that dance at Claridge's. Shouldn't be a bit surprised if I went clean off my head one of these days.

FAY.

I think this must be one of these days.

JACK.

I know I'm beastly young and all that, but do you think—later on—if I work like blazes and get

awfully celebrated and all that—I'll tell you what I thought. If you'd let me be engaged to you and you be absolutely free—you understand, don't you? I'll never want to look at anyone else as long as I live. I know that. And you could do just as you like all the time.

FAY.

I always do. That will suit me beautifully.

JACK.

I say, will it really? And you won't mind my considering myself tied to you like anything?

FAY.

Why should I, if it really amuses you?

JACK.

I say, this is topping. May I get a ring?

FAY.

Well, it ought to be half a ring, oughtn't it? and I don't see how I could keep it on.

JACK.

[*Drawing nearer.*] Well, may I——

[ENTER CHARLES R. *He has changed his coat and shoes.*]

JACK.

[*Aside.*] Oh damn!

CHARLES.

Well, Fay, can I have a little talk with you?

[JACK *makes a movement of rage and exit.*]

FAY.

[*To* CHARLES.] Has Agnes told you?

CHARLES.

She has, and we must see what's best to be done. [*He sits beside her.*]

FAY.

As if there were any best, when you're engaged to people you never want to see again as long as you live.

CHARLES.

Well, I've been thinking, and it seems to me there is just one way even out of such a difficulty as that.

FAY.

Oh, do tell me! Do help! I'll do anything you say. I know you're the cleverest dear in the world.

CHARLES.

I'd like nothing better than to help you, now and always. You know that, don't you, Fay? We've always been friends—though I hardly realised how much you were to me till I heard of these—er—troubles just now. It seems to me, what you want, above all things, is a wise and loving protector. Your father is a very busy man, much away from home, and your step-mother is——

FAY.

Rotten.

CHARLES.

Well, they're not able perhaps to give you all the care that you need now that you're grown up. If I had the care of you——

FAY.

You? How do you mean?

CHARLES.

I mean if I had the right to protect you, I'd soon send those others about their business.

FAY.

Would you really? Would *you* tackle them? I mean Edward and Adolf.

CHARLES.

Of course I would. As your future husband it would be my business to do so.

FAY.

[*Jumping up.*] Oh, how splendid! You'll tell them that I can't possibly see them again, as I'm engaged to you. What a grand idea! And I'll write short farewell letters for you to hand to them. Quite definite farewells. [*Running to desk.*] I'll write them now this minute.

CHARLES.

[*Following her.*] In a few minutes will do, won't it, dear? I want to——

[ENTER PECKER L.]

PECKER.

You're wanted on the telephone please, sir.

CHARLES.

Dear me! All right. [*Going. To* FAY.] Back directly, dear, if I can help you with those letters.

FAY.

Oh, yes. Please, please. I'll begin. [*Exit* CHARLES *and* PECKER.] [*She writes.*] "Dear Edward" or ought it to be "My Lord"? Well—

leave it at Edward as it's down. "I am sorry to tell you that I am obliged to break off our engagement, as I have just become engaged to be married to a very dear old friend, who——" No—I won't put "old"—"to a very dear friend"——. But I'm not really going to marry Toodles. He *is* old, of course. It's ridiculous! How could I? [*Jumping up.*] Oh, what have I done? It's worse than ever. I'm engaged to three!—and Jack—three and a half! [*She throws herself on the sofa and laughs hysterically.*] Oh, goodness! what shall I do? If I ask anyone else for help, I shall get engaged to them too. [*Jumping up.*] Fay, pull yourself together. This is desperate! Have I got the engagement habit? And if I'm engaged to three and a half when I'm seventeen, what will it be when I'm thirty? What's three and a half times thirty? Why, I'll be engaged to whole crowds. How does it happen? I don't know. But it can't go on. What shall I do? Run away again? I must—this minute. There's nothing else to be done. Where shall I go? Some place where I can't get engaged to any more. A convent——

[ENTER PECKER L.]

PECKER.

Lord Edward Wimpole and Mr.—er—a German gentleman would like to see you, Miss.

FAY.

[*Stifling a scream.*] Ah! Where are they?

PECKER:

In the library, Miss.

FAY.

Together?

PECKER.

Yes, Miss. They didn't come together, but——

FAY.

[*Desperately.*] Tell them to wait—they must wait.

PECKER.

Very good, Miss. [*Exit* PECKER.]

FAY.

Barton has betrayed me. The wretch! (*Hustling on her hat and cloak.*] Four of them, all in this house. I'm off. I can't face them. Not likely. My bag——? Leave it—— Where shall I go? Oh Lord! [*Rushes to door L.* ENTER PECKER L. *They collide.*]

PECKER.

Oh, beg pardon, Miss. There's a young man wishes particular to see you. He won't give me his name——

FAY.

Another! [*Frenziedly, to herself.*] Was I engaged to anyone else?

[ENTER SIR DESMOND LOWE, *hurriedly L. in chauffeur's attire.* EXIT PECKER.]

DESMOND.

Fay!

FAY.

[*With a scream.*] Bloggins! You!

DESMOND.

Don't be angry. Can I see you for a moment?

FAY.

I *am* angry. I *must* be. [*Sternly.*] Bloggins, this is unpardonable!

DESMOND.

Don't call me by that awful name. My real name is Desmond Lowe, and I adore you.

FAY.

What do you mean ?

DESMOND.

[*Rapidly.*] I've been masquerading as a chauffeur. I quarrelled with my people and wanted to disappear for a bit. I've just heard that your engagement to that toad Wimpole is off. I was sent here with the car to bring a German bounder from your house. I don't know his name. But I must have two words with you.

FAY.

Blog—I mean Desmond—this is too lovely to be true. It's Providence ! Will you help me ?

DESMOND.

Help you ?

FAY.

Yes. Take me away—now, this minute. Edward is here too, waiting to see me, and the German will kill me. And I believe I'm engaged to several others. Is the car here ?

DESMOND.

Yes, at the door.

[ENTER AGNES, CHARLES *and* JACK, *the latter with large box of sweets.*]

AGNES.

Fay dear, Lord Wimpole and Herr von—[*Sees* DESMOND.] Oh!

FAY.

[*Frenziedly.*] Darling, I'm going away with Bloggins this minute. I can't see the others. Tell them I'm dead. This isn't really Bloggins. It's Lord Desmond—and he's all right.

DESMOND.

[*Bowing.*] I hope you'll forgive me——

FAY.

And we're going to elope—*now.*

ALL.

What?

CHARLES.

But this is impossible.

JACK.

[*Dashing sweets to the ground and with great bitterness*] Caramels!

[*Furious German voice and English drawl heard off.*]

FAY.

Oh, they're coming up! I hear them. Good-bye, darling. [*Kissing* AGNES *tempestuously.*] I love you all, but I can't stop. [*To* CHARLES.] I know you only did it out of kindness, dear Toodles. I'll write you all about it. Oh, quick! [*She seizes* DESMOND *by the arm. They rush out R., she waving her muff. As they disappear door L. opens and* PECKER *announces "Lord Edward Wimpole and Herr von Kustner."* AGNES, CHARLES *and* JACK *stand rooted, staring at the door.*]

[CURTAIN.]

Printed by The Westminster Press (Gerrards Ltd.), London, W.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 05 October, 2018